

## Letter-book of Thomas Forsyth, 1814-1818.

### LETTER-BOOK OF THOMAS FORSYTH—1814–1818.1

1 Major Thomas Forsyth had been for several years engaged in the fur trade,—on Saginaw bay, at Chicago, on an island in the Mississippi near Quincy, and at Peoria,—and had acquired much influence over the Indians of Illinois, especially the Pottawattomies, previous to his appointment as government Indian agent for the Illinois district, at the outset of the war of 1812–15. His headquarters were at Peoria. Upon the close of the war, he served as agent for the Sacs and Foxes, closing his official relations with them previous to the Black Hawk outbreak of 1832. In *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, vi., p. 188, will be found a sketch of his career; and in the same volume (pp. 188–219), there are given the journal of his notable voyage from St. Louis to the falls of St. Anthony, in 1819. and a letter of his to Governor William Clark, of the same year. Further biographical material may be obtained in Scharf's *Hist. St. Louis*, pp. 1293, 1294; Reynolds's *Pion. Hist. Illinois* (ed. 1887), p. 247; Hurlburt's *Chicago Antiquities*, pp. 469, 470, and miscellaneous references in Washburne's *The Edwards Papers*. In 1868, Major Forsyth's son, Robert, permitted the Society to make a complete transcript of his father's letter-books, covering the period, 1814 to 1823. The selections given in vol. vi, of these *Collections*, above cited, are the only publications from these letter-books, thus far made. There are now selected such portions of the first book as refer to the war of 1812–15. They throw new light on this interesting period of our history, and are given in this volume, wherein the British operations are so fully set forth in the reports and letters of McDouall, McKay, Dickson and Grignon, as showing the other side of the picture,—the means adopted by the Americans to keep the Illinois Indians in line with our interests and prevent them from co-operating with the savage allies of England. In this important work, Forsyth's services are shown to have been of great value.— Ed.

**GOV. NINIAN EDWARDS'S2 INSTRUCTIONS TO FORSYTH.**

2 Governor of Illinois Territory from 1809 to 1818.— Ed

Elvirado, Iowa Terr. , May 16, 1814.

The object of my wishing you to return to Peoria, is the preservation of peace between us, and the Potawatomes. As however experience has fully convinced us that there can be no neutrality with savages, in the vicinity of conflicting powers, and as we have found them faithless in all their promises, it becomes equally our interest and our duty, 317 to abandon former, and adopt new measures. You will therefore use your utmost exertions, to engage them in a war. You will insist upon their striking a blow upon some of our enemies as a proof of the sincerity of any promises or professions they may make. In pressing this step upon them, you will shew the necessity for it in consequence of their repeated breaches of their promises. To induce them to comply, you will endeavor to convince them of the justice of the Views of the Government in regard to them, remove all their jealousies about our cupidity for their lands, state that I alone have a right to purchase them, remind them of my declarations to them on that subject, of my conduct in this particular since the Administration of the Government has been in my hands, and of my private and deliberate opinions about that subject, which you will know, and by the aid of these circumstances and other suggestions that will naturally present themselves to your mind, you will endeavor to impress them with an opinion that a change of policy, in this particular, is to be expected.

You will endeavor to shew them how much more they risk than other Indians by continuing the war with us. This you will do by shewing them that they are personally more exposed in consequence of being nearer to us, and that their country suiting us better than any other would be the first to be taken.

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You can press upon them the late overture of the British for peace with us, the probability of that event, and the consequences of their being left to contend with us without British support.

You will try and convince them of the force and resources of our country, shew how dreadful the conflicts with the Creeks have proved to them, and remind them of the second article of the armistice, which obliged them to take up the tomahawk on our side, of the situation of the hostages and the necessity of redeeming them by an act that could not be considered equivocal.

There would certainly be no disposition to keep those hostages, if the Potawatomes would join us in the war, and upon the exhibition of proof that they had struck a blow, 318 and have killed our enemies, a number equal to that of the hostages i should be decidedly in favor of giving up the latter, but upon no other terms.

Any reasonable expence that you may incur in getting them to strike a blow upon the enemy, will be paid by the Government, and they shall further be well supported with ammunition &c., but it must be distinctly understood, that professions only, are not to be relied upon, half-way measures must be abandoned. We must take a firm ground and make them feel what we will do. They must not permit the Kickapoos to reside with them.

### **FORSYTH TO EDWARDS.**

Fort Clark , May 29, 1814.

According to your instructions, I sent for Gomo<sup>1</sup> and other chiefs from the head of the [Peoria] lake, and informed them of the necessity of striking a blow against our enemies: and until that was done, their friends which are now at Belle Fountain as hostages, would not be delivered up.

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1 In November, 1810, Gomo, "chief of a band of Pottawatomies," gave information to Indian Agent William Clark, at St. Louis, of murders committed by two men of his nation.— ( *The Edwards Papers*, p. 57.) See also, *ante*, p. 290.— Ed.

Gomo asked me, if I had delivered his talk which he gave me last month: I told him I had. He then enquired what the answer was. I told him, there was no answer sent. He (Gomo) then told me that it was impossible for them to make war with tomahawks alone, and observed that all the Potawatomie hostages that was given to Gen. [William H.] Harrison have been liberated, and says he knows nothing about the second article of the armistice wherein it says that they, the Potowatomies and others were to make war against the enemies of the U. States.

Gomo says that [Col. Robert] Dickson has gone back to. wards Mackinaw, that an armament was ready to leave Detroit some time ago, to go up and take Mackinaw, but on hearing of a very large British force arriving near Detroit 319 by way of the River Thames, as also another by way of the Lake (Erie perhaps) in boats, the expedition was deferred until another time: that Tecumseh was actually killed last fall on the Thames with one of his brothers. He heard of the expedition under Gov. [William] Clark some time ago at the mouth of Rock River, that he (Gov. Clark) will have many Indians to encounter, and recommends strongly a garrison to be made at Prairie du Chien. He also says that the Indians are quarreling among themselves, that is to say, that the Sioux, Iowas, Winnebagoes, Folio Avoinés and Rock River Saukies are for war, the Ottowas, Chippeways, Potawatomes, for peace. Gomo observes, that the Indians that go to Fort Wayne are very well used and that they get provisions and presents: that a great number of Indias were to have made [a] village with them at the head of the Lake, but the killing o f the Kickapoo some time since, has dispersed them to different parts of the country. He is very uneasy about his friends at Belle Fontaine,<sup>1</sup> and told me, he was certain, that his brother was dead.

1 In Monroe county, Ill. See Reynolds's *Illinois* (ed. 1887), p. 255.— Ed.

Having sent for the Indians to come to this place, I had no doubt but that a few, (say three or four) would have been allowed to come into the Fort,<sup>2</sup> but the commanding officer will not allow any one to come in, the day being blustry and surrounded by a concourse of people, asking a thousand questions, and he (Gomo) having had one of his ribs broke latterly in a drunken frolic, it was impossible to do anything complete. I do not see what use I can be here, if I am obliged to go out in bad or good weather, the distance of two or three hundred yards to discourse with an Indian who may wish to come with any information that he may have for me to hear. Without this plan is altered, we will no doubt, lose the good will of the Potawatomies of this country, for you know very well, it requires time and a little smoking with Indians, if you wish to have any discourse with them.

2 Fort Clark, at Peoria. See *ante*, p. 263, note.— Ed.

I shall await with patience your answer.

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**FORSYTH TO EDWARDS.**

Fort Clark , July 6, 1814.

Since my last letter to you by Lieut. Rector,<sup>1</sup> this post has been visited by many Indians from the head of the Lake, and upper parts of this river: indeed, they are here daily, bringing in to trade, Meat, Fish, &c. which is of very great assistance to the garrison of this place. We see none but Potawatomies. All the Kickapoos that are in the country being with the Saukies on Rock River, and come over occasionally to the Potawatomie villages to steal horses.

1 Stephen Rector, third lieutenant in the rangers.— Ed.

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I was informed by Seigar, a Potawotomie, that some Saukies from Rock River, who were on a visit to their friends on the Missouri, on their return, killed a man, or men, not far from the Saline, on the Missouri.

On the first of June, Gomo, with others arrived here and informed me that there was a great force of British on the river S t Clair, about thirty miles above Detroit, and another British army on Lake Erie, moving upwards towards Detroit. On the 2 d ult., two of the Panther's sons came in a great hurry, and said they were sent by Gomo, to acquaint the garrison that a canoe with several Indians was seen the evening before, passing the head of the Lake, and were supposed to be enemies; but a few days afterwards, they came to this place, and proved to be Kankakee Indians who came down to trade. These Indians said that Nesscotinaineg, the fellow who defeated Capt. [William T.] Cole's party in Loutre settlement in 1810,<sup>2</sup> and murdered the two families near Vincennes in the spring of 1811, had stolen thirty horses from the settlements near Vincennes last winter, and I have no doubt but what it was this fellow with others of the Wabash, who wounded N. Rector, last month.

2 July 20, 1810, Cole and three other men were murdered on Salt creek, in the St. Charles district, by a party of Pottawattomies under the influence of the Prophet and living on the Wabash, in Illinois Territory. It was information relative to this affair that Gomo gave to General Clark, *ante*, p. 318, note.— Ed.

On the 15 th Gomo with some of his friends came to trade, 321 and informed me that an Ottawa Indian had arrived in twenty days from Detroit, and says that the American and British armies were engaged on Lake Erie below Malden, that the Americans were busily employed at Detroit in building boats, and he, (the Ottawa Indian) was informed that the Americans meant to evacuate Detroit as soon as their boats were built; that General Harrison was killed, that all the Indians were invited to a general council at or near Greenville in Ohio, that none but one Potawatomie hostage had as yet returned, that the British have eight Vessels on Lake Huron, and that Mackinaw has been reinforced

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by many troops from Canada, that Dickson had been found much fault with by his Government, and he is to be superceded by another Englishman. Also many Goods &c are to be sent to Green Bay for the Indians, and he (Gomo) is of opinion that the British will build a Fort at Green Bay, that great preparations were made at Mackinaw to defend that place, and the Village was burned, that the British had received many troops in Canada (among whom are many Black troops) since last year, and they (the British) are sending them upwards, that there are many Chippeways from Lake Superior at Mackinaw, and that Dickson took on from Green Bay a large party of Folle avoines to Mackinaw.

Gomo says he has been informed that the British have one hundred sail of vessels on Lake Ontario, but also says it is too many, and cannot be true.

June 20—I was informed by Indians who came to trade, that an Indian who had been to Rock river after stolen horses, had arrived at Gemo's Village, and brought news that Governor [William] Clark's<sup>1</sup> men had killed two Winnebagoes near the mouth of the Wisconsin river, and that he (Gov. C—) was busy building a Fort at Prairie du Chien, and had sent one of his boats down to S t Louis.

<sup>1</sup> For sketch of Clark, see *ante*, p. 258, note.— Ed.

June 23—Two Potawatomes came from the head of the Lake to inform us, that a party of four Winnebagoes and one Chippeway had been seen a few days ago above the head of the Lake and said they were a war party, and must now be near this place.

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June 24—Como arrived with others from hunting, and brought a quantity of meat to sell. He says that Quashquamie brought news from St Louis, that Gomo's brother who is a hostage at Belle Fountain, was to be hung the day after he left.

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July 2—Gomo, Black Patridge and several others came to this place, some on a visit, and many to go down the river, a hunting, and I have told them to hunt on the west side and by no means to cross over on the east side.

Gomo and Black Patridge told, that runners had arrived with news from Green Bay and Detroit and informed me as follows: That 400 British troops have landed, and are building a Fort at Green Bay, and they (the British) have brought to Green Bay a large quantity of Merchandise for the Indians, that a British agent, Chandonet,<sup>1</sup> came to the mouth of S t Joseph's river, to council with the Indians, and did ask them (the Potawatomes of St. Joseph) permission to build a Fort at that place, that it was simply to be a place of deposit to furnish the Indians with all their wants, that their British Father had many soldiers at Mackinaw, and would build another Fort at Chicago shortly to supply the Indians also with their wants, that in a dispute with a young Indian who was raised by him (Chandonet) and is known by the name of J. B. Chandonett, and is an Interpreter in the service of the U. States, in a dispute as I have said before, the agent Chandonet and his late wife's nephew, and his adopted son J. B. C.—the latter drew a pistol and shot the agent dead.

<sup>1</sup> See *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, x., p. 112, note, for an account of Chandonnai, father and son; and a statement of the tragedy here alluded to.— Ed.

The news from Detroit is that the Detroit country was to fall into the hands of the British, four days after this news left that place, that the Potawotamies, Miami's, Wyandotts, Delawares and part of the Ottawas will not interfere in the war, but would remain at peace. A Potawatamie who resides among the Saukies on Rock River, was some days ago at the head of the Lake on a visit to his relations, and brought news that Gov. Clark had a parley with the Sioux and Foxes at Prairie du Chien, that he (Gov. C.), had built a 323 Fort at Pr. du Chien, and had left a garrison of French at that place, and had taken the regulars down to S t Louis.

Como also said that a Potawatamie Indian was hunting on the Mequon some time ago, who fell in with a party of ten or fifteen Kickapoos, and supposes them to be a war party from Rock River, that the Saukies and Kickapoos have made their brags of having killed Americans thrice since winter viz: Boone's Lick on the Missouri, Cape aux Gris, and the other perhaps since I left S t Louis. While I am talking with Gomo, other Indians arrived on horseback, one of which brought in five arrows that he found in the road about three miles from this place. They were known to be Winnebagoe arrows by their make, and no doubt belonged to the party above mentioned. Your Excellency will please remember, that in 1812 I informed you of the promise the British made to the Indians, to send out to Chicago a vessel full of goods to supply their wants: the vessels did not come, and in 1813, Gomo went to Detroit in person, to see about the promised supply of goods. The Indians were given to understand, that it was impossible then (1813) to furnish the goods, as there were so many Indians about Detroit to supply with goods, and that he could not spare any vessel or men, but required the whole to fight General: Harrison.

You may rely upon it, that there is some great plan formed by the enemy, for after the concourse of men belonging to the garrison left us (myself and Indians), I asked Como and Black Patridge as a friend to tell me candidly, if they thought that the British would come to destroy Chicago. They both told me that there was no doubt of it, indeed, I could have wished to have had more talk with them, but the heat was so great, and having sat two or three hours with them on the bank of the Lake, that I was not able to support it, and indeed the Indians complained of the extreme heat, and said it was surprising that a tent or some other kind of shade was not made for them when they came on a visit, as they were not allowed to come into the Fort. Gomo requests that you will allow Heigimaunce and Racoon (now hostages) to return to their friends, and to keep the others.

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**FORSYTH TO EDWARDS.**

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Fort Clark , July 31, 1814.

I am sorry to say that on the 9<sup>th</sup> inst, the day after the Express left this place for S t Louis, I was informed by Indians who were hunting in this vicinity, they saw where a party had crossed the Illinois river over to the East side, as their traces and rafts that they had crossed upon were yet fresh, and it is generally supposed that it was the Kickapoos who were formerly seen on the Mequon, as I mentioned to you in my communication of the 6<sup>th</sup> inst, which I hope you duly received.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> inst, two Indians came here to trade, one of which informed me that he had left Milwaukee about the 6<sup>th</sup> inst; that the Indians of that country told him that the British were building a Fort at Green Bay, and had many Indians of the Sioux, Saukie and other Nations of Indians with them; that Gov. Clark's Army had killed six Winnebagoes at or near Prairie du Chien,<sup>1</sup> and that it was currently reported at Milwaukee that the British were coming the ensuing fall, and build a Fort at Chicago.

<sup>1</sup> See McDouall's report of this affair, *ante*, pp. 262, 263.— Ed.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> the Little Eagle's son arrived here from the mouth of the Mequon and informed me that he had seen five Kickapoos on their return from war, who told him that they had killed seven Americans near W. B. Whiteside's, and that he had seen a handsome plated bridle that they brought off with them; that the party consisted of ten Kickapoos, and that they had been followed by the Americans, and in an attack they lost one of their party and the others dispersed. Those five suppose that the remaining four crossed below the mouth of the Mequon. On the 26<sup>th</sup> all the Potawattamies who went down the river in Canoes a hunting, arrived on the way up to their villages. Those Indians told me the same story about the Kickapoo war party, that Little Eagle's son had told me.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> , Gomo arrived from hunting. He told me that what I had previously heard was correct, and on my supposing that the four Kickapoos that were missing, might 325 have

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also been killed, he said that it was very possible, for if they were not killed, they ought to have crossed all together on their return. Gomo says that this party of Kickapoos are from the old Pemwatome's band who have their village on one of the branches of Rock River, called Pekeetennoe.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pecatonica river.— Ed.

I regret that I did not receive the information about the party of Kickapoos having crossed the river on their way to war, previous to the departure of the Express, as they might have been taken, but on reflection, I hope that the Interpreter who was one of the Express, was informed of it on his way down by the Potawattamies who were hunting along the river, and would be able to give you timely notice. We are all uneasy about the Express men, but if they have taken my advice, I am of opinion that nothing could have happened to them.

### **FORSYTH TO EDWARDS.**

Fort Clark , Aug. 8, 1814.

I wrote you a few days since by two discharged soldiers, and hope you have received it safe. On the 5 th inst., Gomo with four others came to trade. He (Gomo) informed me that an Ottawa Indian had arrived some time ago at Sandy Creek from Detroit and Fort Wayne, and says that the British are in great force at the mouth of the River Thames, that many Indians visited the British army and received many presents from them, and on their return they received many more presents from the Americans in Detroit; that a British officer had been in Detroit from the River Thames; that the American commandant told him not to come on with his army, but to take pity on them and make peace, but that the British officer refused, saying it was immaterial who it would injure, as the British would make war; that all the public property of every description was taken away from Detroit, as also all the troops had left that place except one hundred men who were left to deliver up that place 326 shortly to the British; that Fort Wayne was evacuated and all kinds of property

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taken away, except ten men who are left there for a while, and they tell the indians that they mean to leave that place in a few days.

About the latter end of last month a Kickapoo Indian from Rock River passed through the village of Sandy Creek on his way to the Kickapoos who are now with Gen. Harrison, and there is no doubt but what he is a spy sent on the British. He told the Potawattamies of Sandy Creek that the Fort at Prairie du Chien was taken by Indians and not twenty made their escape in a boat down the Mississippi,<sup>1</sup> and he said that the Kickapoos now with Gen. Harrison must go to the Rock river, and that he was then going to bring them away; that twelve Sauk women were killed by Indians for having lived with Americans.

<sup>1</sup> See McKay's report of this incident in the ' attack on Prairie du Chien, *ante*, p. 264.— Ed.

On my inquiry if the British had gone from Green Bay to Prairie du Chien, Gomo said he had not heard that they had, but observed that I must know that Indians cannot take a Fort without the assistance of Cannon.

### **FORSYTH TO GEN. BENJAMIN HOWARD.<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>2</sup> Brigadier general, commanding the 8th military department, including the territory west of the Mississippi. He died at St. Louis, September 18, 1814.— Ed.

Fort Clark , Aug. 8, 1814.

I had the honor to receive yours of the 31 st ult. yesterday Evening by Fourinier, and I hope as yet I have not been wanting as an agent in vigilance, considering the manner I am situated, not allowed to give a pipe of tobacco, a piece of bread or any trifling article to the Indians to gain their good will, without I give it out of my own pocket, but am as I observed before to you to go and meet the Indians a distance from the Fort in all weather, there to discourse with them as well as I can in this kind of way, and I defy any agent to do any thing complete. Sometime ago an Ottawa Indian arrived from Detroit and Fort

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Wayne and says, that all the public property has been taken away 327 from Detroit, and the troops have all left except one hundred men who are left there to deliver up that post to the British who are in very great force at the mouth of the river Thames; that Fort Wayne was evacuated except ten men, and all kinds of property both public and private, had been taken away, and the ten men thus left have told the Indian s that they will shortly go from thence also.

About the latter end of last month a Kickapoo Indian passed through the village of Sandy Creek from Rock River on his way to the Kickapoos who are with Gen. Harrison, to take them all from thence to Rock River, and says the Fort of Prairie du Chien has been taken by the Indians, and not twenty Americans made their escape in a boat, the remainder have either been killed or taken prisoners.

According to agreement, two Guns were fired off this morning to acquaint Gomo that there was an arrival from St Louis, but no person has come down from the village, and as Fourinter appears pressing, I don't wish to detain him any longer.

### **FORSYTH TO EDWARDS.**

S t Louis , Aug. 20, 1814.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 16 th of June on the 18 th inst from the hands of Gen. Howard.

On the 11 th inst, Gomo, with twelve or fifteen other Indians arrived at Fort Clark, and informed me of the disasters that have taken place at Prairie du Chien and Rapids of Lamoine, all of which I am certain you are better informed than I am. On my supposing to Gomo, that the British would shortly come and take Fort Clark, he said, how can they come? You know the waters are too low in the rapids for craft to come down. Suppose said I they come down to the mouth of Rock River, you know the distance is not great (90 miles) to come across? true, said he, but I believe their intention is to go down

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the Mississippi. He informed me that since the affair at Prairie du Chien, the Saukies, Kickapoos, Foxes and Winnebagoes have received from the 328 British thirteen kegs of gunpowder of 100 lbs each, with some goods, and are expecting many more shortly: that the Saukies are in high spirits, and say they only lost one man and one woman in Major [Lieut. James] Campbell's affair;<sup>1</sup> that M r Dickson had been along the north or rather the west side of Lake Michigan, furnishing the different Indians with goods; that he returned from Milwaukee to Green Bay and from thence he was to go to Prairie du Chien to supply the Mississippi Indians with all their wants; that four Osage Indians were about the 5<sup>th</sup> inst at the Saukie village on Rock River. On my enquiring their business there, Pepper, whom you have seen, said they were married among the Saukies, but my opinion is, that they are arranging matters to join the Saukies in the war against us. Gomo has declared to me frequently that he and his band will not have anything to do in the war: that he was dragged into, it at the commencement, but is now happy that he is at peace, although they are in want of everything and the Indians all about them are plentifully supplied with clothing, &c at Fort Wayne and Detroit by the U. States,—River Thames, Mackinaw, Milwaukee, Green Bay and Prairie du Chien by the British. The whole of the Indians of Illinois river were in their cornfields before I left Fort Clark, and are making their sweet corn. Having received no information of any craft leaving this place for Fort Clark, I thought it expedient for me to purchase a canoe and come down while the weather was yet warm, knowing full well that had I remained there until the cool weather, that the risk would be too great to descend in a canoe, which plan I hope you will approve, it being three months yesterday since I went up, and am again ready to go up in a skiff to make a tour should you think it necessary; as in a skiff I can anchor out, and be out of danger at all times.

<sup>1</sup> *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, ii., p. 220.— Ed.

I herewith enclose you a sketch of the place where Gen. [Samuel] Hopkins returned from. The trace of the cart wheel seen there, is the wagon I formerly mentioned to you, and

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instead of a bark house, it was a log house built by a soldier 329 prisoner, with the logs hauled out with two yoke of oxen and waggon taken at Chicago, Aug., 1814.

I herewith enclose an account of expenditures, which I trust you will find moderate.

### **FORSYTH TO EDWARDS.**

S t Louis , Sep. 3, 1814.

I wrote by the mail that left this place on the 21 st ult. which I hope you received safe. You will please observe, that the Indians are all now busily employed with their corn, and as soon as that is done, (which will be towards the latter end of the month) they will remove to their wintering places. I do not see how the Potawatamies of Illinois river can commence their hunt, as they receive no presents, can get no credit and having nothing to purchase ammunition to commence hunting: and as they are surrounded by Indians who receive presents from us and the British, they must and will be obliged to visit the enemy at Green Bay or Chicago, should the latter make an establishment at that place [or] at Chicago, according to the promise to the Indians formerly. It is true that should Mackinaw fall, it may have a great effect, but nevertheless presents are very tempting to the Indians, particularly to those who are naked, for I can assure you that I never saw Indians so much in want of everything, as the Potawatamies of Illinois river are at present.

At the distribution of gunpowder at Rock River which the Saukies, Foxes, Kickapoos &c received from the British at Prairie du Chien, they shewed it to the Potawatamies who were there, and asked them if their American Father gave them any gunpowder, saying you see how our British Father loves his children.

I received a letter from M r J[ohn] Kinzie in Detroit of the 4 th July last, he says he is appointed Indian agent, and is going up to Mackinaw with Col. Croghan,<sup>1</sup> and hoped to be

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1 Col. George Croghan, who fought with credit in the war of 1812–15 and the war with Mexico. He was the son of the famous Col. George Croghan of the Revolutionary war, and a nephew of George Rogers Clark.— Ed.

330 able to write me by way of Chicago. It is true there may be a letter at Fort Clark for me; but really I have not as yet seen anything to make me believe that Mackinaw is fallen, and you may rely upon it, that the British will strain every nerve to hold the posts of Green Bay and Prairie du Chien; as for the late Grenville Treaty, is it to be supposed that the Kickapoos under the Little Deer will make war against Pemwatome's band of Kickapoos on Rock River? No never, in my opinion.

However, time will tell all, and it appears to me that the recent murders near Detroit, is a bad omen.

### **FORSYTH TO EDWARDS.**

S T Louis , Sep. 12, 1814.

The contractor's boat arrived here yesterday evening from Fort Clark, and I am informed by persons who came down from that place, that a runner arrived at Gomo's village from Rock River on Tuesday the 6th inst, and said that the British and Indians were ready to go across and attack Fort Clark, and might be expected there in a few days; that the runner not finding Gomo at home, followed him down to the Fort. Gomo, as soon as he was told the news, immediately returned to the Fort and acquainted the commanding officer of the news. The British and Indians of Rock River had no news of Major [Zachary] Taylor's boats when the Pottawattamie runner left that place, and there can be no doubt but it was the expedition under Maj. Taylor that has stopped them from proceeding across to Fort Clark, but I am fearful that that place will fall shortly, that is to say, as soon as they can dispose of Maj. Taylor's force, who I am told are busily employed in building a Fort opposite the mouth of River des Moines. Whether Maj. Taylor will be able to complete a Fort at that place, is a doubt with me, as the Indians are so numerous about Rock River

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that I think our people will not be able to cut and haul the timber, as the woods will be swarming with Indians as soon as the enemy finds out what is doing. I am also informed that a party of twenty odd Winnebagoes, crossed Illinois river near the 331 forks on their way to Vincennes settlements some time ago, and that several small war parties of the same nation had crossed above Fort Clark, and we may suppose that it was some of those parties who killed the rangers the other day on Silver Creek.

### **FORSYTH TO RUFUS EATON.**

S T Louis , Sep. 18, 1814.

Understanding you are returned a Delegate for this Territory to Congress, and are preparing to set out for the seat of the General Government, it will be perhaps satisfactory to you, to be made acquainted with Indian affairs as relates to this part of the country.

At the commencement of the present war, the whole of the Indian Nations from Detroit to the Mississippi were prepared and ready to raise the tomahawk against us; it is true that the Wyandott's of Brownstown, the Ottawas of Portage River, and the Chippewas of River Huron above Detroit, hesitated to interfere in the war, but the moment those Indians saw Gen. Hull recross Detroit river, they to a man joined the British. The fall of Detroit and defeat of Gen. Winchester's army at River Raisin, raised the spirits of the Indians to such a pitch that they really thought that nothing could conquer them, but Gen. Harrison's army convinced them to the contrary, and many nations asked peace.

During all this time the Saukies and Foxes had an U. States factory to supply them with all their wants, were fed occasionally by and received many presents from the U. States, and in all their talks they professed the greatest friendship towards the Government. Nevertheless I was always of the opinion that if ever a British force came into the Mississippi, the whole of the Indians would join the enemy and I advised it strongly that the Saukies and Foxes ought to be sent into the Missouri, and to establish a Factory with them. This was done, but many remained at Rock River, and was called the war

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party, but after the peace party had resided one winter in the Missouri, the most of them returned overland to their friends on Rock River, as 332 there can be no doubt but they heard of the British being at Green Bay and expected them at Prairie du Chien, which occasioned their return from Missouri to the Mississippi; still, the deceit of these Indians was so great that when Gov. Clark went up to Prairie du Chien they professed the greatest friendship towards the U. States; but as soon as the Fort at that place fell into the hands of the enemy the reinforcements for Prairie du Chien under Maj. Campbell were attacked and driven back by these very Indians that had been so well treated by the United States, and boasted of having committed many murders since the last winter on the frontiers. We see in the public papers that a Treaty has been made with different nations of Indians viz: Shawanoes, Senecas, Delawares, Miamies, Weas, Kickapoos, Pottawatamies, Ottawas and Chippeways, and they have promised to take up the tomahawk against the enemies of the U. States. Is it to be supposed that the Kickapoos under Little Deer, will make war against the Kickapoos of Rock River under the old chief Pemwattome, or that the Ottawas of Portage river will make war against the Ottawas of Lake Michigan, or that the Potawattamies of Elksheart or S t Joseph's will destroy the Potawattamies of Milwaukee, or the Chippewas who reside near Detroit, will assist in destroying the Chippewas of Saginaw or these who live on Lake Huron? no never, it is out of the nature of things that Indians will kill and destroy their friends and relations for the sake of any white people: true the Shawanoes, Delawares, Senecas and perhaps Wyandottes may assist and fulfil their promise according to the Treaty, but for the others, I am doubtful, as they know full well the consequences of a war among themselves. I will here quote you an instance that happened in July last in Illinois river. In a drunken frolic, a Potawattamie Indian killed his brother-in-law who was a Chippeway Indian. The Potawattamie chief had him arrested, taken and sent delivered up to the deceased Indian's friends towards Green Bay, a chief of the Potawattamies accompanied the murderer to arrange the affair by means of presents, which I presume has been settled, as I understand by a late arrival from Fort Clark that he (the murderer) 333 has returned to his friends. Thus you see what pains they take to avoid a war among themselves.

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In March last, I was instructed to get the Pottawattamies of Illinois River to go to war against the Winnebagos on Rock River. The Pottawattamies had to council with the Chippewa's and Ottawas, and when I went up in April they agreed to go to war, provided that the United States would furnish them with arms and ammunition, this answer of the Pottawattamies was delivered by me as Indian agent to the Governor, but nothing has been done and now it is too late in my opinion.

The Pottawatamies of Rock River are curiously situated at present. By the beginning or middle of next month the whole of them must leave their villages as is customary every year, to go to their wintering places. They have perfectly adhered to the armistice entered into with Gen. Harrison as relates to being quiet and not visiting the British, nevertheless now they are on the point of moving to their hunting places, but they have not a pound of gunpowder, many have no arms, nor can they get them, without they accept them of the British, who are now on Rock River and who no doubt know full well the want of the Pottawatamies for these articles, and will make an offer of presents to them, and common sense will tell us that the offer will not be refused.

It appears to me, that we have hardly ever had a council or treaty with any of the Indian Nations, that both parties were contented. Therefore, there must be fault somewhere. It is a maxim with the British Government (and I think a very good one) that no person is eligible for the place of Superintendent or Agent of Indian affairs without he can talk some one of the Indian languages, by which means it is supposed that he is acquainted with the manners and customs of the Indians: certainly it is not to be supposed that a man from the interior of the U. States, who perhaps never saw an Indian in his life before he came to this country, can know how to treat Indians and obtain their good will. It is not to be expected that a man thus situated can know the characters of the different Indian Nations and the characters of the different individuals of the different Nations. I would  
334 recommend it for the good of all parties that a superintendent of Indian affairs be appointed and reside at this place, and all Indian Agents to report to him, and he to report

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to the General Government: but in the meantime for the Superintendent to acquaint the Governors of the different Territories of any matters that might relate to their territorial governments, having a proper Sup't with proper agents, Indian affairs could never go wrong, and everything would be perfectly understood between the whites and the Indians; half-way measures in my opinion are the worst kind of measures (as respects Indians) that can be followed. Give them what you promise, never threaten, punish first and threaten afterwards. Indeed, give Indians Indian Law, and you may be assured you are always on the right side. If Indians murder retaliate, if theft by stealing horses, take three or four fold, they will soon get tired of doing mischief and be peaceable, but on the other hand, listen to their complaints and do them justice if any of our citizens have injured any of them let them have redress, by which means a superintendant who understands his duty, with good agents who understand theirs, Indian affairs must go on to satisfaction of all parties.

There is a good deal of talk at present in this place about the British and Indians coming down to attack our frontiers this season, but this I cannot believe, without they had a sufficiency of regular troops to garrison the different places, at this place, S to Genevieve, Kaskaskia, &c. It is true they might come down this season with a very large Indian Army, and carry fire and sword through our frontiers, as they can at any time raise from three to four thousand Indians without including the Sioux, or the Mississippi or any of the Missouri Indians, viz:

Saukies & Foxes amounting to 1200, deduct 200 said now to be friendly in Missouri, remains 1,000

Pottawattamies can furnish 1200 warriors but suppose one-half will not come if asked 600

Winnebagoes will come to a man 400

Folle Avoines will come to a man. They are Dickson's garde de corps, 200

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Ottawas of Lake Michigan in their birch bark canoes can be very easily brought down by the way of Chicago & the Illinois river 80

Kickapoos when altogether 40

Chippeways in and about Green Bay & Milwaukee, without including the Chippewas north of Green Bay and those about the Sault de S te Marie and Lake Superior 200

Total 3,600

335

Making an aggregate of thirty-six hundred on a very moderate calculation: nevertheless it does not appear to me that any invasion will be attempted this season, but if the reports are correct as respects Spain having declared war against us I should not be surprised if the Spaniards came down the Missouri by way of River Platte with a great body of Indians, and perhaps the British at the same time may come down from the Mississippi or Illinois River, who will also bring down another body of Indians, by which means an indiscriminate massacre must take place, for let the British and Spaniards be ever so inclined to keep the savages from killing in cool blood, it will be out of their power from the great number of Indians they will bring with them.

As respects the Missouri Indians, I have been informed by a very intelligent young Spaniard who has been brought up [in] this country that the Indians in that country are numerous, viz:

Osages 1,200

Kansas 300

Otters 200

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Missouri's 300

Mahans 500

Total 2, 500

Making two thousand five hundred warriors who reside between this place, and one hundred miles above River Platte: then on River Platte and its branches there resides the Pawnees 1000

Wolf Indians 500

A banditti of vagabonds of all nations commonly called the Republic 300

1,800

You will please observe that no mention is here made of many other Nations of Indians who reside higher up the Missouri as the Rickarees, Mandans &c &c, as also those who reside between the headwaters of the River Platte and the Spanish Settlements in Mexico, who I am informed are numerous. The Shawnees and Delaware in this territory may perhaps amount to 150 or 200 warriors; Cherokees perhaps 600; the others below such as the Chickasaws, Choctaws 336 &c I cannot even make an estimate, as I have never been in that section of country, nor can I find any person in this place who can give me the necessary information on that head, but should I at any time procure any information that I should think worthy of your notice, I will transmit to you by mail.

Wishing you a pleasant and agreeable journey to the seat of Government, &c &c.

**FORSYTH TO THE SECRETARY OF WAR.<sup>1</sup>**

1 James Monroe.— Ed.

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S T Louis , April 13, 1815.

I have the honor to acquaint you that I arrived yesterday from Fort Clark to which place I have been to settle the affair that took place in the month of November last near that Fort, between the Rangers and the Pottawattamie Indians residing on the Illinois river, and I am happy to state that I have succeeded beyond my most sanguine expectations. I herewith enclose a copy of my speech to the Indians for your information, and hope it will meet with your approbation. The Indians received the goods with many thanks, and requested me to return their thanks to all the American chiefs I might see.

From the information that I received from the officer commanding Fort Clark, it appears that those Indians had many opportunities to retaliate, saying at the same time that they were not for War, but for Peace, this you will please observe happened prior to any assurance being made to them that the dead would be covered, as they term it.

I am truly sorry to acquaint you that Gomo, alias Nasima the head chief of the Pottawattomies in the Illinois river is dead. He was a true friend to our country, and was well acquainted with the population and power of the United States, having some twenty years ago visited many of our cities and towns, particularly Philadelphia, New York, Boston &c, and I have heard him speak with delight, of the treatment he received from the late General Washington, then 337 President. He is succeeded by his brother Petchaho, alias Sinnawchewon, who is also an excellent Indian, and I have no doubt but that he will fill the place with credit to himself and friendship towards the U. States. The above named Petchaho, told me that a half Potawattomie and half Winnebago who resides at Milwaukee, killed a white man near Fort Wayne, and the latest accounts he received from that quarter (which was some time ago) the Indians said they would kill the murderer.

Having taken a letter from Gov. Clark enclosing a newspaper giving an account of the Peace, and directed to any British officer in the Mississippi, I signified to Petchaho a wish to have the latter sent over to Rock River, who immediately offered his services and said

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no person ought to be lazy to be the bearer of such good news, and I hope ere this he is among the Saukies and other Indians on Rock River with the news. I took upon myself to tell him to acquaint all the Indians he might see, that peace was made between the U. States and the British, and if the hostile Indians did not immediately desist from making war against the citizens of the U. States, that a Fort would be built at Green Bay and another at Prairie du Chien, by which means the trade between the Mississippi Indians and British Traders would be totally cut off, and they would become an easy prey to the whites. This language I hope will also meet your approbation. Petchaho also remarked that he was at the mouth of Rock River about a month ago, and saw some of the British there from Prairie du Chien, dealing out considerable quantities of Ammunition to the Indians in that country as presents.

The Black Patridge and Petchaho, the two principal chiefs residing near the Illinois river, requested me to make their situation known as respects the high prices of Goods in the Sutler's store at Fort Clark, and they say that they hope the U. States will take pity on them, and as soon as convenient establish a Factory at Fort Clark for them, also hoping they will be able to get goods as cheap in this way, as they formerly did at the Factory in Chicago.

I have frequently ascended the Illinois river to and beyond 22 338 Fort Clark in an open boat, subjecting myself to the inclemency of the weather at all seasons of the year, and obliged to camp on the banks of the river, where myself and men ran the risk of being killed by any strolling party of hostile Indians, when if I had a sufficient boat I might anchor in the middle of the river and be out of danger from any hostile bands of Indians, and screened from the weather at all times.

I therefore would be glad to know if I could be authorized to purchase a small covered boat for the above mentioned purpose, as other agents in this country in similar situations to myself, have all these things under their immediate directions.

**FORSYTH TO THE SECRETARY OF WAR.**

S T Louis , April 30, 1815.

By an arrival from Fort Clark a few days ago, I received information that the Pottawattomies chief Pechaho whom I sent over to Rock River from that place had returned, and told the commanding officer of the Fort that he had delivered the letter (enclosing a paper giving an account of the Peace) to some of the British at Rock River: he also told the different Nations of Indians at that place the consequence that must attend them if they continued the war. The Kickapoo said they were glad to hear of the Peace, and would withdraw from that quarter, but the Saukies and Winnebagoes insisted on carrying on the War. Since which, a man has been killed near Cape aux Gris (no doubt by the Saukies) as many canoes were found by the Rangers after the Indians fled.

**FORSYTH TO COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED TO TREAT WITH THE INDIAN NATIONS.<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> William Clark, Ninian Edwards and Auguste Chouteau.— Ed.

S T Louis , May 30, 1815.

Having received my instructions on the evening of the 16<sup>th</sup> inst, I set out the next day for Fort Clark, at which place I arrived on the 24<sup>th</sup> inst, and have the honor to report to you 339 as follows: On the day of my arrival a number of Potawattamie Indians came to the Fort to trade &c, among whom was Petchaho, the chief of the Potawatamies living at the head of Peoria lake who I made acquainted with my mission to that country, and enquired of him if an Indian could be had to carry the speeches to the Saukies and Kickapoos residing on Rock River, He told me a Kickapoo Indian that was married into a Potawattamie family could be had for the above purpose. I then mentioned to him the other speeches, and delivered him the speech to the Potawattamies. He said he would return home the next day, (the 25<sup>th</sup> ) and the day following he would send the Kickapoo

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Indian above mentioned off to the Kickapoos and Saukies residing on Rock River, and that he would arrive there on the 28 th or 29 th : that he would take charge of the other speeches and would set out in a canoe with three or four other Indians on the 26 th and expected to arrive at Sandy Creek on the 28 th or 29 th , from which place he would send the Winnebago and Menomonee speeches to Cotton Wood river to a Potawattamie Indian who resides at that place, and as some of the Winnebago and Menomonees live in the neighborhood of that river, he would deliver the two speeches. At Sandy Creek he (Petchaho) would deliver the Ottawa speech to some of that nation who reside at Sandy Creek Village. As the Potawattamies are living over a very extensive country, he will deliver the speech to that nation in two parts, one part to be sent to S t Joseph, Elksheart and Eel river. the other part to be sent to Milwaukee by which opportunity the Chippeway speech would be sent to Sheboygan, to Michael's band of Chippeways.

After explaining the invitation to Pechaho, and many other Indians that were present, I asked him if I could depend on him that the speeches would be sent as directed, he told me that I might téll the American chiefs in this country, that the whole should be faithfully sent, but observed at the same time there was not a sufficiency of time given to the Indians to travel the great distance from their places of residence to Portage des Sioux, and said it would require fifteen or twenty days more. I informed him that I had no doubt 340 but that the commissioners would await their arrival. The chief is of the opinion that all the Indians invited will attend the Treaty: that when the Menomonees heard of the peace (which news I took up to Fort Clark last month) they said it was good news, and if the British wished them in future to make war against the Americans, that they would refuse.

This same Indian told me that one man, one woman and two children were made prisoners in the settlements of Vincennes, that the man was killed on the road as the party were returning home, and that the woman with the two children were some time ago at Milwaukee, and he supposes that those prisoners are still at that place. The partizan of that party who made those prisoners, is a half Potawattamie and half Winnebago, and

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resides at Milwaukee. On the 25<sup>th</sup> the Black Patridge with his brother in law came on a visit to Fort Clark. He informed me that a letter from the British in Canada passed near Detroit to S t Josephs, from thence to the Kickapoos on the Vermillion that falls into the Wabash. A Kickapoo Indian took the letter direct to Rock River and delivered it to the British on the Mississippi. The contents of the letter Black Patridge said was as follows:

“When the French left Canada, they requested us (the British) to take care of the Indians. We will do so, and without the Americans abandon all the country on the side of the Ohio river we (the British) will not make peace with the Americans. Take care, you will be invited in the spring to make peace at Fort Wayne, Vincennes and S t Louis, but don't go for there is a trap laid for you.”

This letter arrived at Rock river about the 25<sup>th</sup> of March last. The interpreter at Fort Harrison told the Potawattamies rates who visited that place, that the Indians would be invited to receive presents at Fort Wayne, Vincennes and Fort Clark; that covered ways were prepared at each place, and that while the Indians would be receiving their presents, the Soldiers would rush out of the covered way and destroy the whole of them: that a letter said to be written in the French language and sent up in last month to 341 the Indians in the Illinois river by Gov. Edwards, was carried up to a certain Louis Buisson then at Chicago for explanation. After reading the letter, the latter remarked to the Indians that it contained nothing but falsehoods; that the Americans said that peace was made with the British only to deceive the Indians; that if it was true that peace was actually made, the President would have signed the letter; also, if such was the case his brother who is now living at this place would be glad of it, and would have written him by the same opportunity. You will please observe, that this is the same L. Buisson who abused the Indians at Chicago, in May 1813 for not taking myself and others prisoners when we were at Sandy Creek the latter end of April same year, and threatened to report their conduct to the British Father for allowing us to escape, as he said we were spies sent up among the

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Indians by the American chiefs, and received much money from the American chiefs for those services.

As many Indians will come down the Illinois River to the Treaty, I have directed the Pottawattamies to the last, and when any band of Indians come down the river, for them to accompany such band past Fort Clark, without the whole of the more northern Indians come together, in that case the Pottawattamies to join, and all pass the Fort together.

### **FORSYTH TO EDWARDS.**

S T Louis , Aug. 20, 1815.

I have the honor to acquaint you that I arrived from Illinois river yesterday evening, and have the honor to report to you as follows:

That the Indians in Illinois river are perfectly happy that they have made peace with the U. States, saying that nothing shall be wanting on their part to keep an everlasting peace with all the Americans. On my enquiring if the Saukies, Foxes, Winnebagoes, Folle avoines, Chippeways and Milwaukee Pottawatamies would attend the Treaty and make peace, Sinnawchewon informed me that he had not any news from Rock River since he returned home 342 from Portage de Sioux, and therefore could not say any thing about the Mississippi Indians except the old Kickapoo chief Pemwatome whom he says is sulky and will not attend any more on the Treaty. As for the Winnebagoes, Folle avoins, Chippeways and Milwaukee Indians he says it is impossible for them to do anything until the chiefs return from Mackinaw, which will not be until some time in the next moon, but has not a doubt the Shawanoe who went straight home to Milwaukee from Portage do Sioux, will advise the whole of the Indians to make peace with the U. States.

It appears to a certainty, that the British did tell the Indians last spring that they would not give up Mackinaw, but the Indians have been latterly informed that Mackinaw will be given up as soon as the American troops arrive at that place. In a general conversation that I

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had with the Indians, they (the Pottawatamies), observed to me that they did not mean to trouble themselves any more with the Mississippi Indians, but would in future confine themselves to their own private concerns, and to keep at peace with all parties, and will be always ready to listen to the good council of their American Father.

### **FORSYTH TO CLARK.**

S T Louis , Sept. 22, 1815.

In consequence of a conversation that took place a few days ago between your Excellency and myself, I now take the liberty to give you my opinion as respects the method we ought to pursue towards the Indians to gain their good will and friendship, by which means we may be able to procure that necessary influence over the different Nations of Indians, wean them from foreign influence, and make the whole of them dependant on us, until which period we will always have the Indians as Enemies when we are engaged in war with any of the European powers. I have been often surprised, on reflecting that we as Americans, speaking the same language, having the same customs and manners, and having the same means as the British, that we should have so little influence over the Indian Nations, from which it would appear to me that there is a want of something, somewhere. According to the present method of treating Indians, it is in my opinion utterly impossible to gain the good will, or have any influence with them. It cannot be expected that a Governor, who is also Superintendent of Indian affairs (who perhaps never saw an Indian before he came to the Territory he is to govern) can know what course to pursue toward the Indians, or indeed what instructions to give to an agent. Indians are always fond of novelty, and when they hear of the arrival of a Governor to post off to visit their new Father. The Governor not paying that attention to his visitants that they expected, the Indians return home much disappointed, saying that their new Father is a man of no sense, and did not offer them meat or drink, or any tobacco to smoke, by which means the Indians become prejudiced against the Governor, and in the end [this] leads to something serious. You well know that these little civilities shewn at times to the Indians, have had

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good effects when affairs of consequence are to be settled between the whites and the Indians.

The British Government have brought their method of treating Indians to a perfect system; they have [a] well regulated Indian department with a store of goods and a blacksmith at every post for their use. No person is eligible for the place of agent, unless he can speak some one of the languages. It would be supposed that an agent thus appointed is acquainted with the manners and customs as also with the different chiefs and Head Men of the different Nations of Indians.

A British Indian Agent will not think it derogatory to his rank to smoke and converse with Indian chiefs, by which means he cannot be imposed upon by designing interpreters, as sometimes happens with us. It is my decided opinion that our Government ought to establish a distinct department for Indian affairs in this country. A principal agent ought to reside at this place with sub-agents at the different posts or garrisons, whose duty it would be to report to the principal agent only, and from him to the Government. With 344 agents thus appointed, who know their duty, I would venture to say that Indian affairs would go on properly. A Department thus arranged, I would then recommend to treat the Indians well, and give them Indian laws to treat them well. I mean that a few presents be given them every September, so that they might commence their fall hunting, and a little liquor every spring and autumn for a frolic. The sale of spirituous liquors by traders ought to be prohibited, as it is well known they will sell every thing they have for liquor when intoxicated. Listen to their complaints and render them justice; never promise more than you mean to perform; allow them a free trade to all places and encourage as many persons as possible to engage in the Indian trade, so that the Indians may see that they are dependant on us, and keep them from travelling five or six hundred miles to visit a British post where their minds are poisoned and prepared for any event that may be in agitation. To give them Indian law I would only make this difference, give them so many days to deliver up the transgressor, and if he failed then to retaliate, and not allow any traders to go into their country, and there can be no doubt but they will ask for peace,

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and take care that mischief will not again take place, or if it did they would not hesitate to deliver up the culprit. We see few or no American traders in any part of the Illinois country; two reasons may be given for this: first, Indian goods brought into this country are always sold so high and at a very short credit, by which means those who have the means purchase up the goods and hire those who have not the means to purchase, to barter the goods in the Indian country, by which means a cargo of Indian goods that would employ two or three more persons if the credit was extended, fall into the hands of one purchaser who employs only one person and perhaps himself to barter these goods in the Illinois country: second, it is impossible that any individual can purchase goods in this country and sell them as cheap as the factories.

British traders only can oppose the factories from the extensive credit they have, and the superior quality of their goods. There can be no other way of bringing the fur trade through its proper channels, than by underselling the British traders; to shut them out totally, would be making bad worse, as none of our traders or factors will credit the Indians so extensively as the British traders, and it would take such a vast quantity of woollens to supply all the Indians that it appears that it would be many years before everything could be got in operation to content both parties.

Another thing, without you can fully supply the Indians with goods for their furs, they would suppose that the shutting out of the British traders were intended to injure them, and not the whites. Any person conversant in Indian affairs must agree, [that with] a department judiciously organized, furnished with presents for the Indians as above mentioned, having an auxiliary here, merchants who would furnish our traders with goods equal in quality and price to those brought from Canada by which means our citizens would at least have a share in the Indian trade, and stop the baneful influence of foreign emissaries in the character of traders, and a total dependence on us for their supplies, the Indians would never again attempt to raise the tomahawk against the U. States.

**FORSYTH TO EDWARDS.**

S T Louis , Mar. 31, 1816.

I have to acquaint you that I arrived here last evening from the Illinois river, suffering much from wet and cold during the trip. On my way up I fell in with eight lodges of Kickapoos and Potawattamies at the grand pass, among whom was the Main Pogue, who has lost his hearing in a great measure, and is also otherwise unwell, and I think if he can procure any more spirituous liquor the white people as well as the indians will get rid of a very troublesome character. At Arrowstone creek I found several lodges of Kickapoos who informed me that there were still twenty lodges of Kickapoos under the old chief Pemwatome on the Mississippi: that they could not return home last year for want of horses, and as yet they do not know where they will build their villages; that the Saukies are peaceably inclined on the 346 Mississippi; that a number of that nation who were in Canada have returned home, and the Kickapoos who were also in Canada passed the winter at the Elksheart not far distant from Fort Wayne and are expected home as soon as the season will permit. These Saukies who have been in Canada intend going to Malden the ensuing summer and some Potawattamies who have made indifferent hunts, will also go to Malden to get presents. Thus you see the necessity of a few presents to keep the Indians from travelling five or six hundred miles to visit a British garrison where their minds become more or less poisoned, and are always primed ready for any event that the British may have in agitation.

At Fort Clark I met a Pottawattamie who was in the engagement on the Thames that took place between the American and British armies in the fall of 1813, who saw Tecumseh killed. His story as respects the death of that Indian is as follows: ["] The Indian spies came in with accounts of the American Army being near at hand and where I and others were, we would be opposed to the American horsemen; a Pottawatamie Indian named Kichekemit was on my right, Nesscottinnemeg on my left and on his left stood Tecumseh armed with a sabre and a pair of pistols. We had agreed to fire on the Americans, seize the reins of the bridles and knock the riders off, but the horsemen came up with such

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rapidity and in such numbers that I had time only to fire (but missed) and hide myself in some brush. Kichekemit fell, Nesscottinnemeg run away. I then saw Tecumseh engaged with a foot soldier: the soldier having run his bayonet through Tecumseh's leather coat near the hips, and the latter trying to disengage himself from the Bayonet with his sabre in his hand when a horseman rode up and shot him through the head, and he fell over. An opportunity offered and I made off into the woods where I remained the best part of three days, and then returned to the battle ground. I there found Kichekemit and Tecumseh lying and the whole skin of their heads taken off.["] On my asking this Indian if he was sure it was Tecumseh he saw lying on the battle ground, and if he was not otherwise cut or disfigured not to be known, he observed 347 to me that he lived with his uncle (who was taken on board of the British Fleet by Capt. Perry) at the Prophets town on the Wabash for three years, and was in habits of intimacy with and knew Tecumseh well: that he was not cut nor disfigured, except his being skinned and the breadth of about three fingers and about a foot long of skin and flesh taken from his right thigh. This Ottawa Indian had nothing in view to tell me a falsehood, it was he who commenced the conversation, and I believe he told me the truth. I did not see either the Black Patridge or Sinnawchewon, but saw the Grand Quet and some others at the old French village about Fort Clark. They appeared to be much alarmed about surveying their lands, and as I informed you in a former letter, that the Potawattamies could not settle the business, respecting these lands alone, as the Grand Quet said that the Chippeways and Ottawas must also be invited, indeed it is my opinion that the whole of the Potawatamie chiefs will after they are done hunting, meet and invite the Chippeways and Ottawas to a council, but at the same time complain much that the council fire is removed from Portage de Sioux, which with Indians is a bad omen. It is the opinion of Shawanoe of Milwaukee, that if the Chippeways come down to the Treaty, the Folle avoins and Winnebagoes will also come, otherwise it will be doubtful whether they come or not. Those Folle avoins who have passed the winter in the Mississippi will no doubt come down with the Saukies.

**FORSYTH TO CLARK.**

S T Louis , June 3, 1817.

According to your instructions, I ascended the Mississippi to Fort Armstrong with the annuities for the Saukie and Fox Indians. I was detained at that place two or three days owing to the Indians being in a frolic. As soon as the Indians were in a situation to do business with, I crossed over to the Fox Village from the Fort and informed the head chief of the Fox Nation that I was sent by you to deliver to them their annuities. Shortly after, the Indians collected and came to my boat when the chief told me that he could not accept 348 of the annuities as they did not wish to part with their lands, saying at the same time that they would do without goods and live on roots rather than part with their lands. I told them that I had not come there to buy any lands from any Indians, but could assure them that what land the United States had purchased of the Indians they would certainly keep, and as they did not see proper to receive their annuities, that I would take them back to S t Louis. To this the Indians made no reply, and returned to their Village. I immediately descended the river to the Saukie Village and on my arrival there informed the chiefs of my business. They requested of me to remain there all night as it required the chiefs and Braves to have a meeting. To this I assented and to my surprise the next morning about 8 or 9 o'clock the head chief of the Foxes with some of his people came to my camp and requested of me to deliver them their annuities. On the delivery of which they complained of the quantity being small. I told the chief that it was all I had for him, that he might take or leave them as he might think proper. He took them saying that the Americans would be angry if he refused.

The Saukie chief sent for me, and I found a large lodge full of Indians, and after being seated some time I was addressed by one of their chiefs saying that ["] this pipe I hold in my hand you see is full of tobacco, and we have not as yet smoked out of it, but we do not say that we will not smoke out of it, but when we do not know, it has been sent to us by the Osages and Kansas Indians to join them in a war against the Pawnees.["] After

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some ceremony I acquainted them with my business, and what had passed the day before between myself and the Foxes. They received their annuities without any hesitation.

On enquiry I found that the whole of the Saukie Nation are now at their old Village on Rock River about a mile from its mouth. They told me that their Village consisted of one hundred lodges, and their numbers were 1000 men without counting many stout lads. Indeed I have seen many Indian Villages, but I never saw such a large one or such a populous one. They appear stationary there and 349 their old lodges are repaired and some new ones lately built, and others building. I enquired of some of the chiefs who came from Missouri about making a new village: they said that they would remain where they were: on my supposing to them that perhaps next year they would remove to the west side of the Mississippi, their answer was, that perhaps they might, but as yet they did not know. The Fox Village is within a few hundred yards of Fort Armstrong across the channel of the river and consists of twenty odd lodges and numbers about two hundred warriors, being about one-half of the whole of the Nation. I was informed that many Saukies visited Malden, and the British agents at that place told them to be quiet and peaceable towards all people, by no means to do any mischief to any of the Americans, saying you complain that the Americans have taken your lands from you and built forts in your country; never mind that, the time will come when they will move off your lands and out of their Forts without any trouble and of their own accord.

The Americans [say], (says the British agent,) that if we gained any advantage over them during the late war. it was because you assisted us; when war takes place again, we will not ask you to assist us, we are strong enough ourselves, but we will not be first to commence another war, it will be another people (perhaps the Spaniards): that they (the Saukies) had been invited to go and settle on or near Red River: that the Hudson Bay Company would furnish them with guns that would kill without powder, as the guns they now use. I found ten Indians, Osages and Kansas at the Saukie Village, and found that they had been invited by the British last year through the medium of the Saukies to visit Malden, and when the news [came] of those Osages being on their way to Rock River,

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eight Indians of the Saukie Nation were immediately dispatched with the news to Malden, and true it was, that they went there and returned home in twenty-six days, bringing a white belt of wampum with them to the Osages, pressing them to go on to Malden. Two of these Osages have come down with me to this place. The remaining eight I left at the Saukie village, and who 350 no doubt will go on, with the Saukies to Malden and Detroit. About one hundred Saukies will go to those places and they were to have started from their Villages on Rock River about the 28<sup>th</sup> ult. When the Saukies were at Malden last year, the British Agent told them that he had received letters from M<sup>r</sup> Dickson in England, and that he would soon leave there to visit his Indian friends on the Mississippi, and would walk more upright than ever, that their great Father over the Great Waters is well contented with M<sup>r</sup> Dickson's conduct during the late war, and that he (Dickson) was a greater chief than ever.

On Dickson's arrival at Prairie du Chien a deputation from the Saukie Nation went up to see him.<sup>1</sup> He told them in public that he was immediately returned from England: that their Great Father the King of England bid him tell his red children to be quiet and to consider the Americans as their friends, and by no means to do any mischief to any people whatever, but in private he told them that he would return shortly and go into the northwest by way of Lake Superior and when he would get to Red River, his red face, his red head and the Red River would flame up and burn. In this double entendre something may be surmised, and your good judgment in Indian affairs will put the proper construction on this declaration.

<sup>1</sup> *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, x., p. 213.— Ed.

A few minutes previous to my leaving the Saukie chiefs they requested me to represent to you that during last fall and this spring, that white people took and destroyed sixty of their canoes that were left on the banks of the Mississippi, hoping you would make them some recompense for this loss. The chiefs also requested me to beg you would send them

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a blacksmith to mend their guns, axes and hoes. In this way you will render them a great service.

I neglected to observe in its proper place in this report, that Dickson's son who has gone to river S t Peter, now in the pay of the British Government, and Dickson himself, is trying hard (and I think he will succeed) to draw off all the Sioux, Folle avoines and Chippeway Indians to the Red 351 river; part only of the Saukies talk of going, but in my opinion, if any go, the whole of the Nation will follow.

### **FORSYTH TO THE SECRETARY OF WAR.<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> George Graham, *ad interim*.— Ed.

S T Louis , Sep. 29, 1817.

Previous to the late war, my brother<sup>2</sup> and myself were partners in trade under the firm of Kinzie and Forsyth. We had purchased goods in Detroit on credit to trade at various places, at Chicago and Peoria, the first being the place of residence of my partner, and the latter my place of residence. In June 1812 we shipped on board a vessel at Chicago, for Detroit, furs and peltries to a large amount to pay for the goods we had thus purchased. Mackinaw having fallen into the hands of the enemy early in the war, the master of the Vessel (on board of which our Furs and Peltries were shipped) not knowing of the War or that Mackinaw had fallen into the hands of the enemy, put into that port as usual.

<sup>2</sup> John Kinzie, his half-brother.— Ed.

The Vessel and Cargo were immediately taken possession of and all became lost. In August following, the troops at Chicago were all killed or taken prisoners by the Indians, and our loss of property there became great, and had my brother not been a man of much esteem by the Indians, himself, wife and children would have fallen under the tomahawk.

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The months of Oct. and Nov. of same year our property was all destroyed at Peoria, first by the Indians and secondly by a party of militia commanded by Capt. Craig of Shawanoe town in Illinois territory, and myself with all the inhabitants then at that place brought down by Craig and his party, after burning many of our houses and keeping much of our property.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See Thomas E. Craig's report of this affair, in *The Edwards Papers*, p. 80. It was evidently written while the author was greatly excited. See also, Reynolds's *Illinois* (ed. 1887), p. 251.— Ed.

These losses have thrown a heavy debt on myself and 352 partner amounting to 12 or \$15,000 for which sum my partner has been sued for in the courts of Detroit since the peace, which judgment is now against us, and I think it but just that we should try and recover as much of the losses as possible. I therefore wish to go on to the city to be there by the next session of Congress, to lay my claims before that honorable body and if possible obtain something for our creditors. Travelling after people who are much scattered and who are acquainted with the circumstances of these losses, to get their depositions has prevented me from going up to my agency, and as it is absolutely necessary for me to go on to the city, I wish your permission for that purpose to lay before Congress my claims, hoping it will meet your approval. If not, I must resign my appointment in the Indian Department, although small as my salary is I have found it useful in my family since I have met with these losses.

Since my appointment (April 1812) I have been a good and faithful public servant, and if I am well informed, this is well known at the city: if I have been misinformed in this respect my fellow citizens of this place in particular can vouch for the services I have rendered my country during the late war, also my capacity as an Agent and standing as an honest man.

Your answer as soon as convenient will be gratefully received.

**FORSYTH TO THE SECRETARY OF WAR.<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> John C. Calhoun.— Ed.

Georgetown, D.C. , Mar. 19, 1818.

I have the honor to acquaint you that I was appointed a sub-agent in the Indian Department in the spring of the year 1812 with a salary of \$600 per annum and three rations per day, the whole amounting to \$819 per ann., and resided where I had lived many years previous to my appointment at the Village of Peoria on Illinois river. After the commencement of the late war my situation became perilous, yet I had the address to retain the friendship of all the leading men among the Indian s by which mean s I had it in 353 my power to frustrate many of the plans of the British and Indians, and was informed by the then executive of Missouri Territory that a timely letter of mine to him saved the whole district of S t Charles from the Tomahawk and scalping knife. In the fall of the same year (1812) the whole of the Inhabitants of Peoria myself among the number were brought down prisoners by a party of Illinois militia under the command of a Capt. Craig. After plundering and destroying much of our property and the remainder left to the merciless savages who burnt what buildings were not destroyed by Craig and his party who also destroyed all our cattle and cornfields.

In the spring of the year 1813 the then Governor of Missouri Territory appeared very anxious to procure information from the Indian country. I offered my services to the Governor at a time when the Indians [were] killing people daily on the frontiers and when no other person for any consideration whatever could be had to go among the Indians. I ascended the Illinois river to Sandy Creek and remained several days in a camp of upwards 500 warriors and had the address to collect such information as the Governor wished for, and returned safe back to S Louis. In the fall of the same year (1813) I volunteered my services and went out against the Indians under the command of the late

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Gen. Howard. The result of that campaign is well known to the war Department, and if it was beneficial to the country, no fault can be attached to me.

A certain Mr. Dickson, a very active British Agent, hearing of my activity among the Indians and knowing my influence among the different Nations and having found that I had frustrated some of his plans, made great offers to the Pottawatamies to take me a prisoner and bring me to Green Bay. Those Indians refused so to do on account of the friendship that existed between them and myself, but a Winnebago chief accepted the offer of Dickson for me or my scalp, and did actually descend the Illinois river in the month of April 1814 within Six miles of Fort Clark on Illinois river in search of me. I had left my camp to descend the river to Fort Clark a few hours when those same Winnebagoes 23 354 (ten in number) arrived at the same spot that I had left, and I was informed subsequently by the Pottawatamies that this party of Winnebagoes were much dissapointed on hearing of my departure, saying they had pledged themselves to Dickson to deliver to him my person or scalp.

At the Treaty held with the Indians in 1815<sup>1</sup> the commissioners appeared satisfied with my assistance at that Treaty and acknowledged my services in a handsome manner. In the summer of 1816, I was again requested by the same commissioners to assist them in extinguishing the Indian title to what is now called the Soldiers Bounty Lands in Illinois Territory. My exertions in this work were such that had I not interfered I am certain the Indians would never have agreed to part with their lands. However, I must refer you to the Commissioners report of that Treaty, which will speak for itself.

1 At Portage des Sioux, July 18, 1815. The commissioners were Clark, Edwards and Chouteau.— Ed.

I have been informed by the late Gen. Howard and the present Governors of Illinois and Missouri,<sup>2</sup> that the services that I have rendered my country from the commencement of the late war to the present date have been duly reported to the War office, and they have

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all obligingly told me that I deserved well of my country. It cannot be supposed otherwise, situated as I was at the commencement of the late war, having the whole of my personal property in an Indian country, but that I must have met with great losses. In this I have had more perhaps than my share. For my partner and self having taken many goods on credit in Detroit in the fall of the year 1811 consequently we owed much money for these goods so taken on credit. During the hunting season that followed, we had collected at our different trading places many furs and peltries which we shipped on board of a vessel at Chicago for our creditors in Detroit, but Mackinaw having fallen into the hands of the Enemy early in the War this Vessel not knowing of the fall of Mackinaw, put into that port as usual. The Vessel and

2 Edwards and Clark.— Ed.

355 Cargo were immediately taken possession of by the Enemy, and our furs and peltries became forever lost to myself and partner.

The dreadful affair that happened to the troops at Chicago in Aug. 1812 occasioned another loss of property to myself and partner. As I before observed, I was brought down a prisoner by a certain Capt. Craig, and between Craig's men and the Indians our loss of property was again very great, and I have now before Congress a petition for loss of property sustained at Chicago and Peoria hoping I will be able to recover something for my creditors, but alas, it will fall short of being sufficient for that purpose, owing to the total loss of our furs and peltries at the post of Mackinaw.

Thus Sir, you are made acquainted with the risks I have run, the sufferings and losses that I have experienced during the late war, and I hope you are already acquainted with my capacity as an Indian Agent and integrity for the good of my country. I am also happy to say, that I have the friendship of the principal inhabitants of the country where I live who can vouch for the truths of the above statements; hoping from the within statements of facts and recommendations from people high in office in the country where I am well

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known, I would respectfully ask that my salary as an indian Agent may be augmented to that of a full Agent's salary with the usual privileges, &c., &c.

Your answer when convenient will be gratefully acknowledged.